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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION (10/13): Palestinian
Authority officials, Hamas, and opinion leaders react to speeches by
President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mishal

Summary:

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mishal gave back-to-back speeches October 11. In his speech from Ramallah, President Abbas reiterated that the PA is committed to the peace process. However, he noted that in order to achieve peace, the Israelis must halt all the settlement activities and stop escalating their attacks against Jerusalem. Abbas also explained the rationale for postponing the vote of the Goldstone report, saying that the PA feared it would not secure enough support for a positive outcome. Finally, Abbas accused Hamas of taking advantage of the repercussions of postponing the vote to evade the national reconciliation agreement and provoke tension.

Minutes later, Mishal gave a speech from Damascus in which he insisted on the Palestinians' right of resistance as long as the occupation continues. He accused the PA and Abbas of wasting the only chance to punish Israel for committing war crimes in Gaza by postponing the vote on the report. He also called on the PA to stop the security coordination with the Israelis and Americans. Mishal explained that Hamas called for postponing the national reconciliation agreement date because the climate is not appropriate after the anger that resulted from the Goldstone issue. He accused President Obama of being biased to the Israelis, and expressed his surprise that Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize for his words only.

Main Stories:

Hamas, Palestinian Authority officials, and opinion leaders reacted

immediately to the two speeches in the Palestinian and Hamas-run press.

Palestinian press and Hamas media outlets highlighted Hamas's swift reaction to Abbas's speech; spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri noted on Al-Jazeera Arabic that Hamas considered President Abbas's remarks on the Goldstone report an attempt to evade responsibility. He opined that the speech included many inaccuracies and contradictions, and was full of attacks against Hamas that do not serve Palestinian national interests. Finally, Abu Zuhri said that Abbas should have admitted that he made a mistake when he called for a postponement to the vote on the Goldstone report.

Spokesperson of the Hamas government in Gaza, Taher Al-Nouno, noted in a press conference that President Abbas's speech was an attempt to deceive the public and evade responsibility for his role in the postponement of the vote on the Goldstone report. He noted that Palestinians expected an apology from the President but instead Abbas appeared adamant that his intentions not be misunderstood. He added that the speech did not show a spirit of reconciliation, but rather it deepened divisions and hatred.

Hamas's Gaza leader Ismail Haniyyeh said that the speech reflected the severe political crime that Abbas committed against the Palestinian people. He noted that the speech merely reiterated Israeli and US policies, and added that "the conspiracy that is being cooked up against our people is very big, and its final chapters are almost ready."

Hamas's representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan expressed his

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disappointment that Abbas did not apologize to the Palestinians, but rather he chose to escalate things with Hamas. He noted that Hamas needs more time to consult with its leadership concerning national reconciliation in light of Abbas's speech.

In parallel to these reactions, the local press also highlighted Palestinian reactions to Khaled Mishal's speech. The dailies report on the Fatah Central Committee condemning Mishal's speech and expressing its disappointment in the attacks against Fatah and the Palestinian leadership. The reports note that Mishal used a tone of incitement against Fatah and President Abbas.

Al-Ayyam reports on Abdel Alim Da'na, member of the Central Committee of the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine, reiterating that the only way to end the Palestinian division is through the national reconciliation process and therefore he criticized Mishal for postponing the reconciliation date. Political leaders and analysts echoed this reaction, also criticizing Mishal for postponing the national reconciliation agreement date.

Fatah leader Fathallah Abu Samhadana noted that Hamas is only looking for justifications to evade the national reconciliation agreement and the national dialogue. He stressed that if it wasn't the Goldstone report, Hamas would have invented other reasons to avoid signing the national reconciliation agreement.

Fatah leader Hussein Al-Sheikh said that Mishal's speech complicates the national reconciliation efforts. In reference to Mishal's statement that they keep resistance as an option, Al-Sheikh inquired, "Where is the resistance that you are talking about when you agreed to a truce with Israel in Gaza?"

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Omar Hilmi Al-Ghoul opines in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida under the title "What did Mishal start the auction with?" (10/13): "Comparing the two speeches of President Abbas [Abu Mazen] and Khaled Mishal, we notice a big difference between the two. We have a balanced and wise man [Abu Mazen] and a selfish narrow minded man [Mishal] who is ready to do anything in order to become the leader of the PLO ... Mishal could have done much better if he abandoned the hatred and selfishness. He could have criticized Abbas and the leadership but in an objective manner ... The auction is open to everyone, Mishal

can keep raising the ceiling to destroy national unity and ruin the political regime."

2) Rajab Abu Sirriyeh opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the title: "Abbas/Mishal : Parallel Speeches" (10/13): "While the Abbas speech was very well written and focused ... Mishal had an emotional speech that addressed the political instincts of the public, a typical third world leader. Abbas and Mishal represented two different worlds. One belongs to the modern world who seeks to become a member of the democratic regime, while the other still belongs to a world that disappeared a long time ago ... Mishal's speech will serve Netanyahu and ... unfortunately, the Palestinian state exists between the weakness of the PA and the stubbornness and selfishness of Hamas."

3) Oraib Rintawi opines in Paltoday.com under the title "An honest analysis of Abbas speech" (10/13): "How did you, Mr. President, allow your people - including Yasser Abed Rabbo - to

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speak on your behalf and admit that you made a mistake in postponing the vote on the Goldstone report if you say that there wasn't a mistake? ... You could have solved all of this with one statement of apology to your people ... Such a sentence could have rescued the national reconciliation."

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